

AD-A196 038

Calculated Risk?--Military Theory and the
Allies' Campaign in Italy, 1943-1944

by

Major Daniel W. Krueger
Corps of Engineers

School of Advanced Military Studies
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
GENES EST CLAVIS VICTORIAE

4 May 1988

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE					
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION School of Advanced Military Studies, USAC&GSC		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) ATZL-SWV	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
			WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.		
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Calculated Risk?--Military Theory and the Allies' Campaign in Italy, 1943-1944.(U)					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) MAJ Daniel W. Krueger, USA					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Monograph		13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 88/5/4	
15. PAGE COUNT 48					
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP			
			World War II-Campaigns Operation Shingle		
			Operational maneuver Anzio Landing		
			Italy Mediterranean Theater		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) This monograph examines the Allies' campaign in the Mediterranean in 1943-1944 in order to answer the question of whether the Allies could have won and, if so, how. More specifically, this study looks at the utility of military theory for explaining cause and effect, and for providing a basis for operational insight and assessment of risk. The monograph first reviews the strategic background and Allied planning at the campaign and major operation level, focusing on the critical time of December 1943. Then it reviews the results of the execution of those plans. Given these results it turns to analyze the Allied actions, to trace effects back to their causes and to evaluate the means employed utilizing theory as the framework for the analysis. This analysis forms the basis from which to draw conclusions regarding the utility of theory for this campaign. (continued on other side)					
20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL MAJ Daniel W. Krueger			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (913) 684-2138		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL ATZL-SWV

↳ There were three

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Keywords: Operation Shingle,
Anzio landing (KR),



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88-2877

School of Advanced Military Studies
Monograph Approval

Name of Student: Major Daniel W. Krueger
Title of Monograph: Calculated Risk?--Military Theory and
the Allies' Campaign in Italy, 1943-1944.

Approved By:

James R. McDonough
Lieutenant Colonel James R. McDonough, M.S.

Monograph Director

L. D. Holder
Colonel L. D. Holder, M.A.

Director, School of
Advanced Military Studies

Philip J. Brookes
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Director, Graduate Degree
Programs

Accepted this 11th day of May 1988.



Accession For	
NTIS CRA&I	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

ABSTRACT

CALCULATED RISK?--MILITARY THEORY AND THE ALLIES' CAMPAIGN IN ITALY.
1943-1944. by MAJ Daniel W. Krueger, USA, 48 pages.

In September 1943 allied armies of the United States and Great Britain landed on the European mainland in its "soft underbelly" taking another step toward the defeat of Nazi Germany. Expecting to be in Rome by the end of that year, the Allies instead found themselves embroiled in a prolonged struggle of static warfare reminiscent of the western front of 1915-16. In the end the allied armies suffered 312,000 casualties in a campaign whose purpose was not clearly decided. This monograph examines the Allies' campaign in the Mediterranean in 1943-1944 in order to answer the question of whether the Allies could have "won" and, if so, how. More specifically, this study looks at the utility of military theory for explaining cause and effect, and for providing a basis for operational insight and assessment of risk. This particular historical case study is significant in that the challenges of difficult terrain, coalition command, multinational forces, limited resources, and bad weather faced by the operational commanders of this campaign are factors that may weigh heavily for operational commanders in future conflicts.

This monograph first reviews the strategic background and Allied planning at the campaign and major operation level, focusing on the critical time of December 1943. Then it reviews the results of the execution of those plans. Given these results it turns to analyze the Allied actions, to trace effects back to their causes and to evaluate the means employed utilizing theory as the framework for the analysis. This analysis forms the basis from which to draw conclusions regarding the utility of theory for this campaign.

Conclusions reached in this study are threefold. First, the operational commanders involved did not have a true appreciation of the operational risks taken when major operations were designed and executed in January 1944. Second, the operational and strategic commanders may have chosen a different course of action if these risks had been more fully appreciated. Third, classical theory, as represented by the writings of Clausewitz, Jomini, and even Liddell Hart, does have utility in explaining cause and effect and may well have provided the commanders concerned in this case clearer insight at the operational level of war.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Allied Strategy and Operational Planning.	4
III.	The Results.	15
IV.	Analysis--Tracing Effects Back to Causes	21
V.	Analysis--Evaluating Employment of Means.	32
VI.	Conclusions.	37
	Map of South-Central Italy.	41
	Endnotes.	42
	Bibliography.	47

I. INTRODUCTION.

On 3 September 1943 the Eighth British Army under General Bernard Montgomery landed on the toe of the Italian peninsula. Within a week the Allies made additional landings to include the Fifth U.S. Army's landing at Salerno under LTG Mark Clark. The Allies had taken their first step back onto the Axis dominated European mainland and made another stride toward the defeat of Nazi Germany. Almost a year later, in August 1944, these two armies had advanced from the toe of the peninsula to the the top of the boot and were continuing to attack the Germans defending on the Gothic Line in the Apennine Mountains from Pisa to Ancona. The Allies were well on their way to amassing the toll of 312,000 casualties they would suffer in the Italian campaign. What had been accomplished in this year of blood besides a small gain of Italian soil as they advanced up the peninsula? Just as importantly, what had not been gained--what opportunities had been lost?

The accomplishments of the Italian campaign were several. Originally designed as a stroke to knock Italy out of the war, the invasion became key in bringing Italy to capitulation, thus fulfilling its strategic aim. Additionally, the campaign diverted German forces from employment elsewhere, specifically from the Russian front and northwest France in anticipation of Operation OVERLORD in June 1944. The Allies also succeeded in capturing Rome, a prize of some political and moral value, as well as military value in the form of airfields in its vicinity. The Italian campaign, therefore, contributed to the combined bomber offensive by providing airfields from which targets in southern Germany could be ranged.

These accomplishments did not come without cost, a cost manifested not only in numbers of casualties but also in other enterprises foregone. To provide sufficient landing craft for European/Mediterranean operations, the Allies cancelled Operation BUCCANEER and later PIGSTICK in the China-Burma

theater, the former entailing a personal commitment from President Roosevelt to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of China. Though the invasion of southern France, Operation ANVIL, was not cancelled, it was deferred until mid-August 1944, contrary to the agreement of the "Big 3" in Tehran that it should be launched in conjunction with OVERLORD. With regard to efforts on the Italian peninsula, questions also remain over whether the advance could have been quicker and whether German fighting units might have been destroyed rather than just pushed back with the advance. The Allied campaign in Italy was marked by high hopes, qualified successes, and frustration. It was a "grueling struggle....replete with controversial actions and decisions."¹

Any insight to this frustration and controversy, any answers to its multiple "what ifs," can only be gained by a study that includes a focus at the operational level of war. While much has been written regarding the Italian campaign, most of it focuses at the tactical or strategic level. FM 100-5 defines operational art as "the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations."² Operational art links tactical efforts to strategic aims. It entails developing a feasible and balanced relationship between aims, means, ways, and risks in a theater of operations. This is certainly the business in which Eisenhower, Wilson, Alexander, and even Clark were engaged.

December 1943 stands out as a time of critical operational decisions in the Mediterranean theater. At the strategic level, the American, British, and Soviet leaders met in Tehran to lay the foundation for the continued prosecution of the war in all theaters. During that month, operational commanders within the Mediterranean designed their next major operation as well as continued planning for future operations of their campaign. The highlight of these operations was the amphibious landing of American and

British troops at Anzio. Operation SHINGLE, an effort designed to break the stalemated frontal assault up the leg of Italy.

The next few months would show the Anzio landing to be at best a very limited success and in the terms of Martin Blumenson's book, "a gamble that failed." In later appraisal of the operation, General Clark would write:

What seemed most likely under the circumstances was that the Germans would be forced to divide their strength on both fronts, and that we would achieve a breakthrough in one place or the other. That would have been according to the schoolbooks; but in warfare, things very seldom happen according to the book.³

General Clark challenged the utility of theory and doctrine. Answering that challenge is the purpose of this paper. In contrast to Clark's disparagement of theory, could it have provided him with insights that might have allowed him to meet the strategic aims within the constraints of available means? Could theory have allowed a better calculation, perhaps a correct calculation, of what was alleged to be a "calculated" risk?

One of the theorists to be considered in this study, Carl von Clausewitz, addressed the nature of theory and its utility. Theory is the intellectual attempt to find abstract truths in the linkage of cause and effect. Theory can serve as a framework for critical analysis--Clausewitz called it "an essential basis for criticism." He identifies three intellectual activities contained by the critical approach--pure historical research (which has nothing in common with theory), tracing effects back to causes, and evaluating employment of means.⁴ This paper will focus on these last two areas. First, I will review the strategic background and Allied planning at the campaign and major operation level, focusing on the critical time of December 1943. Then I will review the results of the execution of those plans. Given these results, I will analyze the Allied actions to trace the effects back to their causes and to evaluate the means employed utilizing theory as the framework for the analysis. This analysis should

form the basis from which to draw conclusions regarding the utility of theory for this campaign.

Before continuing, one may ask, "Why look at Italy?" The answer is twofold. First the particular challenges faced by the operational commanders of this campaign may well be faced by operational commanders of today should war break out. These challenges include coalition command, armies of diverse nationalities, the constraints of a secondary theater, and the difficulties of terrain and weather. Secondly, the study of the allied campaign in Italy is enlightening because the Allies faced an opponent who understood the operational level of war. That is not to imply that the Germans did not make mistakes as much as it is to recognize them as formidable opponents, a point that must be considered when evaluating a campaign or operation and drawing any conclusions.

II. ALLIED STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING.

Three key strategic decisions on the part of the Allies set the context for plans in the Mediterranean theater of operations and the larger European theater of war. First, the Allied aim for unconditional surrender of the enemy was implicit in their planning even before U.S. entry into the war. Second, in recognition of the danger to its British and Russian allies and in spite of the fact that Japan had attacked the United States, the U.S. agreed to a coalition strategy of 'Europe first.'⁵ With Europe having priority as a theater of war, the third decision provided the strategic basis for victory in that theater--a cross channel attack from England into the continent to drive to the heart of Germany. Although Allied views varied over the timing and exact concept for this attack, they came to agreement at the TRIDENT conference in May 1943 that the attack would be mounted with a target date of 1 May 1944, and would have a basis of 29 divisions.⁶ At the QUADRANT

conference. three months later. this agreement was confirmed.

In order to maintain support for his 'Europe first' decision and to honor his May 1942 commitment to the Russians for a second front. President Roosevelt decided to employ U.S. forces in North Africa and effected a combined decision in July 1942 for what would become Operation TORCH. The issue of what to do after completion of operations in North Africa was taken up at the Casablanca conference in January 1943. The agreements reached at the conference set the Allied forces off on a new campaign in the Mediterranean beginning in the summer of 1943 with the strategic aims of knocking Italy out of the war. diverting German forces from the Eastern Front, securing the sea lines of communication through the Mediterranean, and seizing airfields. The first operation was to be Operation HUSKY, the amphibious invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The build-up of forces in the United Kingdom would continue. forces prepared to launch a contingency invasion of northwest Europe if the German situation rapidly deteriorated.

General Eisenhower. Commander of Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) in the Mediterranean. planned and conducted operations to meet these aims. resulting in the Allied armies fighting in southern Italy in the autumn of 1943. The situation looked good in early October. "By knocking Italy out of the war, gaining control of the Italian Fleet, acquiring air bases in Italy. and occupying Sardinia and Sicily, the United States and United Kingdom had already achieved their basic strategic objectives in the Mediterranean. and had achieved them earlier than anticipated."⁷ Allied forces continued to battle in Italy to fulfill the sole remaining strategic aim assigned the Mediterranean theater by the Combined Chiefs of Staff--maintain maximum pressure on the Germans to prevent their redeployment to other fronts. The Fifth and Eighth Armies. under the Allied 15th Army Group. continued to drive north. with Rome as the focal point. In October they crossed the Volturno

River and pushed the Germans back from their defensive positions in the Barbara Line to the Bernhard Line. In November they attacked again and by December were pushing the enemy off the Bernhard line to the Gustav Line. But progress was slow and it was obvious that the Germans were mounting a determined defense south of Rome, contrary to earlier estimates that they would withdraw to northern Italy. October 1943 can be seen, therefore, as the fruition of the Mediterranean campaign initiated by the Allies at the Casablanca conference in January. The following campaign was yet to be shaped.

As the previously established strategic aims were fulfilled, British planners looked ahead and were disturbed by the limitations that their agreements at QUADRANT held for further operations in the Mediterranean. Accordingly, Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff sought another strategic conference in mid-November, this time to include the Soviets.⁸ Their desire was met in the form of the SEXTANT-EUREKA conferences, held in late November and early December in Cairo and Tehran. The British position going in to the conference may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Launch OVERLORD in May or June 1944, July at the latest.
- (2) Capture Rome; advance in Italy to line of Pisa-Rimini and go over to defense in Italy.
- (3) Continue in the Mediterranean with a major amphibious operation in one of two directions:
 - (a) Land on the Istrian Peninsula, advance through Ljubljana Gap on Vienna. (preferred course)
 - (b) Land in south France, advance up the Rhone Valley to join with the cross-channel invasion effort.
- (4) Conduct operations in the eastern Mediterranean at a scale not to exceed one tenth of available Allied resources.⁹

The American position was firm on the primacy of OVERLORD, cautious with regard to any drain of resources into the Balkans, and concerned over continued operations with China in order to facilitate the eventual shift of the main effort to the defeat of Japan.

After the American and British leaders met in preliminary sessions in

Cairo, it was obvious that the Soviets as the third party would have a decisive role in setting the Allied strategy. At Tehran Stalin lived up to his role as tiebreaker. He first surprised the other delegates by announcing that after the collapse of Germany, the Soviets would join their allies in the fight against Japan. With respect to Europe, Stalin made it clear that he thought OVERLORD must be given priority over all other operations. Because of his strong views on OVERLORD, he requested that a firm date be set and a commander-in-chief be appointed during the conference. To support OVERLORD, Stalin favored a landing in southern France, preferably prior to, but at least coincident with, the cross-channel attack. After detailed discussions and compromise among the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the recommendation agreed upon was:

That we will launch 'Overlord' in May, in conjunction with a supporting operation against the South of France on largest scale that is permitted by the landing-craft available at that time.¹⁰

Despite this apparent Allied unanimity the British Chiefs had argued for and won concessions to their interests in the Mediterranean. Sixty-eight LST's which were scheduled to be redeployed from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom by 15 December were allowed to stay until 15 January. The advance in Italy was to continue to the Pisa-Rimini line. The timing of ANVIL, the operation against southern France, was set to coincide with OVERLORD, not to precede it as Stalin had proposed. The timing of OVERLORD itself, while originally set for May, was reset for the first of June.¹¹ With the subsequent cancellation of BUCCANEER in order to provide sufficient landing craft for a two division ANVIL, Prime Minister Churchill's timetable remained intact--Rome in January, Rhodes in February, and ANVIL in the spring.¹²

Just as the Allies were reassessing their situation and making strategic and operational decisions in late 1943, the Germans also reappraised the

situation. As the struggle continued on the Eastern Front in 1943, Hitler faced the dilemma of Italy's possible break with the Axis. As early as May Hitler had already charged Field Marshall Erwin Rommel with developing plans for the defense of Italy, activating for this purpose a headquarters, Army Group B, in Munich. When Hitler ordered the Kursk offensive in June, Rommel determined that he would not have sufficient forces to defend all of Italy if the Italians defected. Hitler concurred with his assessment.¹³

Through the summer the German supreme command, OKW, developed plan ACHSE (AXIS) for the defense of Italy and the Balkans in case of Italian surrender. A major concern of the plan was to eliminate any possible harm to German troops at the hands of the Italians. On the other hand, Hitler did not want to give Italy any excuse for its capitulation by withdrawing forces prematurely. OKW and Army Group B developed plans for Italy whereby key harbors, rail junctions, and communication centers would be seized and the Italian Army disarmed as quickly as possible. German troops in southern Italy under Kesselring would conduct a withdrawal to come under the eventual command of Rommel and the shelter of an established defense in the Apennines. The Po Valley would be retained. By the end of August 1943, German troop dispositions in Italy included eight divisions south of the Apennines under OB Sued (Kesselring) and eight divisions in the North under Army Group B.¹⁴

The events of that autumn caused Hitler to reconsider the plan for Italy. The capitulation had come but the Italian Army had been disarmed and dispersed within days. The Allies had landed, but their choice of landing near Salerno rather than farther north was "a great relief to the German Supreme Command."¹⁵ The Germans still held Rome. Mussolini was liberated and a puppet government established. Before, and for some time after, the invasion the Germans felt that the primary strategic goal of the Allies was the Balkans, not Italy. Southern Italy could serve as a base for further

operations against the Balkans. Withdrawal to the North would not counter such efforts. Lastly, Kesselring's 'withdrawal' through September and October was conducted very slowly and successfully.

In reconsideration Hitler made a series of decisions for the theater. On 12 September he specifically kept Kesselring, at the latter's request, independent of Rommel's command until the Fuhrer personally ordered differently. On 4 October, he reaffirmed the maintenance of both commands in Italy and also ordered Rommel to send reinforcements to Kesselring. On 5 November Hitler made his final decision and appointed Kesselring as Commander, Army Group C. The Germans would defend on the Bernhard Line.¹⁶

Though Kesselring had won Hitler's confidence his task was not easy. The mission was to secure the southern flank and to keep the war away from the homeland.¹⁷ Even though the Allies withdrew seven divisions from Italy in November for OVERLORD, they still outnumbered the Germans along the front and retained air superiority and control of the sea.¹⁸ Many of Kesselring's troops had been in combat for months, with continual withdrawal certainly affecting morale. To his advantage the German general had the rugged terrain of Italy and the winter weather to help him block the Allied advance.

Faced with this situation Kesselring designed his defensive operation. Utilizing the terrain, he continued preparation of a series of defensive lines in depth. While reacting to the various Allied thrusts he continually regrouped his forces in order to provide a coherent defense of the front backed by mobile reserves. In conjunction with OKW, he designed and rehearsed detailed contingency plans to react to potential Allied amphibious landings. Kesselring marshalled what air power he did have for concentrated strikes that would inflict damage on the Allies while minimizing his own vulnerability to Allied air operations. An example was the raid on the port of Bari on 2 December 1943, taking out sixteen ships.¹⁹

As the German defenses stiffened in southern Italy with the decision to stand rather than withdraw, the Allied advance went from a crawl to a creep to a halt by mid-December. Even while the conferees met in Tehran their assumption that Rome would be taken shortly was proving to be wrong. The Allies had crossed the Volturno River and closed with positions of the 'Winter Line' in October and early November. In mid-November General Harold Alexander, the 15th Army Group Commander, launched a renewed offensive with the following concept:

Eighth Army was to gain possession of the transverse road from Pescara to Avezzano. When that had been achieved, Fifth Army would attack up the Liri valley to Frosinone, some forty miles south of Rome. At that point as it was hoped, at the turn of the year--a seaborne landing would be made south of Rome, directed on the Alban Hills.²⁰

The Eighth Army attacked 20 November, crossed the Sangro River but stalled by late December in the vicinity of Ortona, short of Pescara. The Fifth Army attacked 1 December but by mid December had advanced less than ten miles with Frosinone being more than thirty miles distant. Hope had not come to fruition. General Clark recommended the cancellation of the amphibious assault on 18 December, to which Alexander agreed.

The capture of Rome would not be easy. If the leaders at the Tehran Conference did not realize this, the commanders in Italy did by now. Recognizing the secondary role of the theater, Eisenhower recognized the need for caution:

We had to follow a plan that would avoid reverses, costly attacks, and great expenditures of supplies but which would continue to keep the enemy uneasy and, above all, would prevent him from reducing his Italian forces to reinforce his position in northwest Europe. Carefully planned minor offensives, with success assured in each comprised the campaign I expected to use during the winter; it was dictated by the objective and by the need to sustain morale amidst the inescapably miserable conditions of the Italian mountains.²¹

However, Eisenhower was on his way out of the theater. The SEXTANT-EUREKA conferences resulted not only in strategic decisions but also in a number of command changes to implement them. Eisenhower, selected as Supreme

Allied Commander Allied Expeditionary Forces, was to be replaced by General Henry Wilson. Coincidental with Wilson's assumption of command on 8 January 1944, the executive direction of the Mediterranean theater was changed. Eisenhower had reported directly to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Wilson would report to the Combined Chiefs through the British Chiefs of Staff.²² These command changes would clearly increase British influence upon operations in that theater.

With the faltering drive on Rome and the onset of British command in the Mediterranean, Prime Minister Churchill visited AFHQ on his way back from Cairo and was delayed there by illness. By the time he departed he had made the capture of Rome the *de facto* immediate objective of theater efforts. To Churchill "the capture of Rome was both strategically and politically imperative" and he thought that Rome could still be captured without interfering with ANVIL in the coming spring.²³ As Turkey was reluctant to join the war, Churchill conceded that an invasion of Rhodes was becoming infeasible. The Prime Minister obviously held views differing greatly from Stalin who at Tehran had expressed the view that "the capture of Rome and other operations in the Mediterranean could only be regarded as diversions."²⁴

As Churchill sought to revitalize the "scandalous stagnation" of the war in Italy, his Chiefs of Staff became involved in the operational design for accomplishing the mission. Their thinking was not new but revisionist. The concept of the earlier winter offensive had included a one division amphibious assault to land behind the enemy front just south of Rome, at Anzio. According to the British Chiefs of Staff:

The weakness of this plan is that the assault in that strength on the coast cannot be launched until the Fifth Army is within supporting distance of the force to be landed. If the available lift could be increased, however, a stronger force could be landed without waiting for the main army to arrive within immediate supporting distance. Such a landing moreover would have a more far-reaching effect on the whole progress of the campaign, and would be much more likely to open

the way for a rapid advance.²⁵

Churchill turned to Roosevelt on 25 December with a request to adjust shipping schedules to provide the necessary landing craft for a two division assault. With these resources, Churchill felt the operation could "decide the Battle of Rome, and possibly achieve the destruction of a substantial part of enemy's army."²⁶

Although Eisenhower was to leave shortly, Churchill pulled him into a Christmas Day conference to gain his concurrence. Eisenhower

agreed to the general desirability of continuing the advance but pointed out that the landing of two partially skeletonized divisions at Anzio, a hundred miles beyond the front lines as then situated, would not only be a risky affair but that the attack would not by itself compel the withdrawal of the German front.²⁷

General Wilson was also in attendance but was too new to have an appreciation of the proposed operation. Alexander was to carry the responsibility of designing and executing the operation to fulfill Churchill's aim.

Alexander's opponent, Kesselring, defended in January 1944 with twenty-one divisions. His Tenth Army had ten divisions and defended the southern front on or forward of the Gustav Line with XIV Panzer Corps in the west and LXXVI Panzer Corps in the east. Fourteenth Army had eight and one-half divisions and defended the rear in northern Italy. Under his direct control Kesselring also had the I Parachute Corps, with three divisions, in the Rome area, one of them still forming and another reorganizing. Twelve divisions total were combat capable.²⁸ For the contingency of any amphibious landing, OKW had earmarked reinforcements to include two reinforced divisions, one from France and one from the Balkans, and four separate regiments plus an artillery regiment from the Reich.²⁹ Kesselring continued his defensive preparations across the front, in depth, and along the coasts, utilizing Italian labor groups to assist in the effort. The Germans had approximately 550 operational aircraft that could support in Italy.³⁰

At the turn of the year Alexander still found his forces more than 80 miles south of Rome with his Fifth Army in the west and Eighth Army in the east. The major avenue of approach to Rome was the valley of the Liri River, through which Highway 6 ran to Rome. However, the Allies were still closing to the head of the Liri Valley at the beginning of January whose entrance was dominated by German held Monte Cassino with positions integral to the Gustav Line. On the west coast Highway 7 also offered an approach to Rome, but it required passing through the potential chokepoint at Terracina. Additionally, deliberate flooding of the coastal plains by the Germans degraded the value of this approach. In front of the Eighth Army in the east, the coastal plain was broken by numerous rivers emptying from the Apennines into the Adriatic so that an advance up the back side of the boot cut across the grain of the terrain. Alexander did not alter his approach from the original lines of operation envisioned in November, the Liri Valley and the Tyrrhenian Sea. Anzio provided a suitable coastline for amphibious assault and the Alban Hills, or Colli Laziali, stood as the last key terrain south of Rome, sitting between Highways 6 and 7, twenty miles inland from Anzio.

After the loss of seven divisions to OVERLORD in November, Alexander had received some replacement divisions and had a total of 18 for the upcoming operation. Fifth Army would have a total of eleven organized under the X (Br) Corps, the II and VI (US) Corps, and the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC). VI Corps, under MG John Lucas, would make the landing at Anzio with the 1st (Br) Infantry Division and the 3d (US) Infantry Division plus other attachments. The 45th Division and 1st Armored Division (less CCB) would be follow-on forces into the beachhead. The remainder of Fifth Army would attack on the southern front. Eighth Army had six divisions with two corps, the V and XIII British. Alexander moved the 2d (New Zealand) Division to

Army Group reserve just prior to the Anzio landing. Whi's landing craft had been a major concern in late December and early January. Prime Minister Churchill had insured that enough were on hand to meet the commanders' requirements fully for the two division lift and for sustainment. The Allies maintained 2000 operational aircraft in the Mediterranean.

According to Alexander the operation was "designed as a pincer movement to force Kesselring to draw off his strength from the Cassino front to protect his threatened rear, thereby weakening his main front and giving us a good opportunity to break through his winter line."³¹ In his written order of 2 January 1944, Fifth Army was tasked "to carry out an assault landing on the beaches in the vicinity of Rome with the object of cutting the enemy lines of communication and threatening the rear of the German 14 Corps," and to attack toward Cassino and Frosinone "shortly prior to the assault landing to draw enemy reserves which might be employed against the landing forces and then to create a breach in his front through which every opportunity will be taken to link up rapidly with the seaborne operation."³² Alexander must have been fairly confident. At a conference with subordinate commanders on 9 January he remarked that the operation was certain to frighten Kesselring and "said in great glee that OVERLORD would be unnecessary."³³

As Alexander's plan called for Fifth Army to command both the main effort on the front and the amphibious landing force, General Clark had significant influence on the design and execution of this major operation. In Clark's eyes, Operation SHINGLE would "turn the enemy's flank at a point just below Rome" and facilitate the prompt capture of that city.³⁴

If we could seize the Alban Hills, we would threaten the Gustav Line defenders from the rear and might force the enemy to give up his powerful defense line in order to avoid entrapment. Our end run from the Gariogliano sector some sixty miles up the coast to Anzio was designed to provide just such a threat and to force the enemy to fall back beyond Rome. We would, in effect, stab a dagger into Kesselring's right flank at Anzio, with the blade directed at the Alban Hills.³⁵

If Clark's intent was somewhat vague, his Fifth Army order of 12 January was also ambiguous:

Mission. Fifth Army will launch attacks in the Anzio area on H-Hour.
D-Day:

- a) To seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio.
- b) Advance on Colli Laziali.³⁶

The order was personally explained by BG Brann, Clark's G-3, to MG Lucas on the date of its issue. The intent was not to force Lucas to make an advance to seize the Alban Hills if such action would risk the sacrifice of his corps. Clark counted on the British Eighth Army to attack simultaneously to fix German forces in its zone. Additionally he counted on the Air Force to "isolate" the beachhead area. With this combination of effort Clark hoped that his army "would achieve a breakthrough in one place or another."³⁷

The final plans called for a series of corps-sized attacks by Fifth Army on the Gustav Line prior to SHINGLE. On 12 January the FEC would attack through the mountains to surround Monte Cassino from the north and east. On 17 January the X Corps would attack across the Garioliano River and advance to secure high ground dominating the Liri Valley from the south. After closing to the entrance of the Liri Valley at the Rapido River, the II Corps was to attack on 20 January, cross the Rapido, and exploit the crossing with an armored thrust up the Liri Valley toward Frosinone. On 22 January, VI Corps was to land at Anzio.³⁸ Allied naval forces would transport the assault force and provide fire support for SHINGLE while the air force would fly interdiction missions against German reserves deploying toward the beachhead.

III. THE RESULTS.

The Fifth Army's initial effort in its coordinated attacks on the Gustav Line began on 12 January with the FEC attacking with its two divisions abreast toward San Elia and Atina. The French achieved initial surprise but soon faced a bloody fight in rugged terrain as the Germans reacted with their

own counterattacks. The French attack continued for four days and gained San Elia, but the Corps paused in exhaustion and had only just reached the Gustav Line defenses. The French resumed the attack on 21 January, but this effort also made strictly limited gains before pausing again to regroup.

On the left the X (Br) Corps attacked across the mouth of the Garigliano on the evening of 17 January with two divisions abreast and also achieved tactical surprise. Within twenty-four hours they had crossed ten battalions in spite of local counterattacks by the defending 94th Division. By the 19th, the divisions had seized Minturno and some of the high ground overlooking the river while in the eastern part of the Corps sector the Corps's 46th Division launched another attack across the river. However, the Germans had reacted in strength to the X Corps's initial success. On 18 January Kesselring ordered the I Parachute Corps headquarters along with the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions to counterattack the bridgehead. Arrival of the lead elements of these forces on the 20th brought the X Corps attack in the west to a halt and repulsed the 46th's attempted crossing near Sant' Angelo.

After attacking on 16 January to seize Monte Trocchio, the last high ground before the Rapido, the 36th Infantry Division of II (US) Corps launched its river crossing effort into the prepared defenses of the German 15th Panzer Grenadier Division on 20 January. By 23 January it was clear that repeated attempts had produced nothing but failure for the 36th. But the combination of Fifth Army attacks on the Gustav Line had stretched the German defense to its limit by 21 January. All local reserves had been committed and Kesselring had committed his mobile army group reserves. The coast south of Rome lay virtually undefended.

The VI Corps invasion force initiated its landings in the vicinity of Anzio at 0200 hours on 22 January. Total surprise was achieved. The Corps

established security and began unloading its equipment. By the end of the next day all equipment of the assault forces and the floating reserves had been unloaded. The Corps also advanced to its planned beachhead line extending roughly six miles inland and twelve miles along the coast, centered on Anzio.³⁹ Lucas continued to focus on his build up and did not launch any major advance from the beachhead during the first week. After prodding from Clark on 28 January, Lucas struck out on 30 January with a coordinated attack toward Campoleone and Cisterna. By 1 February the attack had stalled. Alexander and Clark, visiting the beachhead that day, decided that Lucas should take up the defense against the counterattack that would surely come.

Unknowningly, Lucas had barely preempted the Germans on 30 January. Starting on the day of the landing the Germans had reacted quickly, drawing reserves from wherever available to knit together a defense around Anzio. On the day of the landing, Kesselring ordered I Parachute Corps back to the Rome area to take charge of the various battalion sized elements at or heading toward Anzio. On 24 January General von Mackensen and his Fourteenth Army was ordered to take charge. By the beginning of February the beachhead was cordoned by I Para. Corps on the north and the LXXVI Panzer Corps, relieved from the Adriatic sector by LI Mountain Corps, in the south, each with about two and one-half divisions of mixed elements. Mackensen's force grew to eight divisions before he started counterattacking on 7 February. After preliminary actions he launched his major effort on 16 February, but the attack did not succeed in eliminating the beachhead. Before it ended, however, the Germans had pushed the VI Corps back to a line generally of the same trace as that occupied on 23 January.

In order to link up with the encircled VI Corps, Fifth Army made renewed attempts to break through the Gustav Line, resulting in the second and third battles for Cassino, but a breakthrough was not achieved. Starting in late

January and lasting through mid-February, the French divisions and the II (US) Corps continued to attack to the north and east of Cassino. With the II Corps exhausted, the newly formed New Zealand Corps replaced it in line and resumed the attack on 17 February. By 23 March Fifth Army had still failed to break the Gustav Line in spite of massive bombing efforts on both the monastery and town of Cassino to assist the New Zealand Corps's advance. The Winter Offensive had come to a dreary conclusion on both the Anzio and Gustav fronts.

Obviously the operation had failed to achieve the intended results. Rather than advancing the Allied front north of Rome Alexander instead faced two separate stalled fronts still south of Rome. Consequently, the timetable envisioned by Churchill at the turn of the year was now jeopardized. As early as 22 February General Wilson requested that ANVIL be cancelled. Discussion over the future of ANVIL continued through the spring. The operation competed with Italy for troops and with OVERLORD for landing craft. The Allies set 20 March as a deadline for reviewing the situation in Italy and reaching a decision. On 22 March the British Chiefs recommended cancelling ANVIL.⁴⁰ On 24 March the U.S. Joint Chiefs agreed that it could be postponed until about 10 July. On 17 April the British Chiefs voiced their opposition to even a postponed ANVIL, seeing that the "withdrawal of any resources from the Mediterranean front might well render it impossible for us either to exploit a victory in that theater or to achieve our overriding purpose--to contain as many German divisions as possible away from OVERLORD."⁴¹

Of course as the ANVIL debate was proceeding, the British operational commanders in the Mediterranean were indeed planning their victory in the spring. Starting as early as February and working on the basis of an appreciation developed by General John Harding, Alexander's new chief of

staff, the 15th Army Group headquarters devised Operation DIADEM. DIADEM was to be a three phased operation. Phase I called for the destruction of the Gustav Line while fixing Kessel's mobile reserves with a deception scheme. In Phase II, the Allies would continue the advance to destroy the Hitler Line, positions built during the winter about six miles behind the Gustav Line. The air force would interdict German reserves as they began to react during this phase. Phase III included a breakout by the VI Corps at Anzio with the mission of driving to Valmontone to cut the German Tenth Army's LOC's. Major regrouping was required before the operation. Eighth Army, minus V British Corps, redeployed west of the Apennines to conduct the main attack up the Liri Valley. Fifth Army shifted west and was to conduct a supporting attack across the Garigliano and to link-up with the Anzio force. VI Corps would attack on order, anticipated at about D+4.⁴²

Alexander's intent for DIADEM was "to destroy the right wing of the German Tenth Army; to drive what remains of it and the German Fourteenth Army north of Rome; and to pursue the enemy to the Rimini-Pisa line inflicting maximum losses on him in the process."⁴³ It is clear that Alexander now envisioned a battle of annihilation.⁴⁴ Besides this shift in operational concept, several other differences between DIADEM and the winter operation held the promise of victory in the spring. A first and obvious difference was the weather, now offering the Allies better conditions in which to exploit their armored strength and general mobility superiority. Second, DIADEM planned for greatly concentrated forces compared to the earlier battles. What had been division sectors were now corps sectors; former corps sectors were now army sectors. Almost twice as many divisions would be pushed into the fight. This was true for VI Corps as well at Anzio. In contrast to the initial two division assault force that landed in January, VI Corps would have six divisions and quickly gain a seventh for the breakout in

DIADEM.

The 15th Army Group, now Allied Armies Italy, kicked off the operation on 11 May. The FEC provided the key to destabilization of the Gustav Line with a breakthrough up the Ausente Valley followed by a drive through the Aurunci Mountains, spearheading the Allied advance and soon jeopardizing German positions in the Hitler Line. On 18 May Cassino was finally taken by elements of the II (Polish) Corps. Alexander committed the Army Group reserve, the 36th (US) Division, to VI Corps at Anzio and ordered the Corps to attack on 23 May. By 15 May, II and VI (US) Corps made contact. Kesselring conducted a withdrawal of elements of both his armies during the period 26-30 May and took up positions in the Caesar Line, still south of Rome. On 30 May the 36th Division of VI Corps found a gap in the German defenses near Velletri. By 2 June, Fifth Army had forced the Germans to withdraw again to a general line of the Tiber and Aniene Rivers. On 4 June 1944, Fifth Army elements entered Rome.

The next two months were a stark contrast to the first months of 1944 as the 15th Army Group continued in pursuit of Kesselring's forces. Although they got off to an awkward start, the Allies advanced with the Fifth Army in the west and the Eighth Army in the east, pursuing the German Fourteenth and Tenth Armies respectively, until late June when the Germans stabilized temporarily on the Frieda Line in the Lake Trasimeno area. In late June the Allies attacked again, broke the Frieda Line and resumed the pursuit up to the Arno River. In early August they had generally attained the position envisioned for January by the Tehran conferees, except in the east where they were still short of Rimini. Kesselring took up the defense of northern Italy on the Gothic Line with the forces he had withdrawn from the south and four additional divisions with which he was reinforced in June.⁴⁵

IV. ANALYSIS--TRACING EFFECTS BACK TO CAUSES

Could the Allies have reached the Gothic Line in March? Why did Alexander's "Battle for Rome," as he titled it in his orders, fail? Reviewing the course of events seems to be these questions. Theory provides a framework that helps to explain why. Let's first recap the situation in which the opposing forces found themselves in late 1943.

The German force under OB Sued was operating in a secondary theater with a mission to hold the enemy at bay as far south as possible for as long as possible. It was clearly on the defensive, both operationally and tactically. While ceding many advantages to its opponents, it was not outnumbered, occupied very defensible terrain, had mobile formations for reserves, and had many experienced units. It was capable of a defense that included strong counterattacks. To win, Kesselring needed to hold around for as long as possible while preserving his force. If a major portion of his force, to include mobile reserves, were destroyed, he would lose.

The Allies were also in a secondary theater; their mission was to fix the German forces there. They were on the operational and tactical offensive, having the capability to attack or defend. While not outnumbering the Germans, they had significant advantages in air power, sea power, and material superiority and mobility for their land forces. They could win by continuing to achieve tactical successes while retaining the capability for an operational success. They would lose if the possibility of that operational success was negated.

It was in these circumstances that Mr. Churchill set Rome as the next objective in the theater, citing its strategic and political value. The strategic value was debatable, as the conference at Tehran had already indicated. Its political value is and was even more difficult to assess. But granting that Rome did have political value, let's turn to look at the

implications of battling for Rome as a political objective.

Clausewitz's fundamental premise in his treatise On War is that war is an extension of policy. Therefore, the political interests of the state must always govern the military actions taken to achieve those interests. "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."⁴⁶ However, he also stated that the political aim can not be a tyrant. "It must adapt itself to its chosen means." In terms of means, the most superior according to Clausewitz is the destruction of the enemy's force. While lesser means are available and may lead to success, the commander must recognize the interests and resolve of his enemy when choosing any lesser means. The seizure of any terrain objective such as a city must be considered in this context. The possession of terrain objectives can be the immediate object of an engagement, i.e. tactics, but operations should focus on a decisive battle.⁴⁷ In a particular example that seems relevant to the Allies' situation, Clausewitz offered the following:

If for instance the main objective of the attack is the enemy's capital and the defender has not taken up a position between it and the attacker, the latter would be making a mistake if he advanced straight on the city. He would do better to strike at the communications between the enemy army and its capital and there seek the victory which will bring him to the city.⁴⁸

Although Jomini generally saw war as less subservient to policy, he also recognized that operational art must sometimes address the capture of political objectives. Jomini addressed these within his discussion of "political objective points" in his work, The Art of War. If political objective points were not also objectives justified by purely military considerations, then "their consideration should be postponed until after the decisive events of the campaign."⁴⁹ Clearly, Jomini, like Clausewitz, felt that the operational commander should focus on a decisive battle, not the

political objective. The political objective would be gained as a result of the decisive battle. Accepting this need for a decisive battle, the logical question then is how to obtain and win one.

The foremost Clausewitzian concept that answers this question is that of the "center of gravity." Clausewitz used this term to describe the focal point to which all strength should be applied in order to achieve decisive victory. He recognized this concept at both the strategic and operational levels of war. In Book Eight, on war plans, he describes a center of gravity at the strategic level as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."⁵⁰ While the specific nature of a center of gravity at the strategic level may be rather diverse, Clausewitz is explicit concerning the concept at the operational level. "A center of gravity is always found where the mass is concentrated most densely. It presents the most effective target for a blow; furthermore, the heaviest blow is that struck by the center of gravity."⁵¹ Clausewitz's premise then, combining this concept with his "first principle of strategy," is to identify the enemy's center of gravity and to strike it with "as many troops as possible....at the decisive point."⁵²

Jomini treated the concept of "decisive point" at length; indeed, he may be considered the author of this theoretical concept. In his first maxim of the "fundamental principle of war," Jomini states that a successful commander must "throw by strategic movements the mass of an army, successively, upon the decisive points of a theater of war...at the proper times and with energy."⁵³ Jomini defines a decisive point as a geographical point or line that due to its terrain value or positional value relative to the enemy gains an immense importance; a point from which a force is "capable of exercising a marked influence either upon the result of the campaign or upon a single enterprise."⁵⁴

Application of these two concepts to the Allies' operation in January

1944 seems almost too obvious. The German center of gravity was the right wing of Kesselring's defense-- the XIV Panzer Corps with the mobile reserves that backed it up. The decisive point was the Colli Laziali. Alexander and Clark were apparently on the right track as suggested by theory, or at least very close to it. However, let's continue the analysis in more detail.

The essence of Alexander's operational concept was the amphibious turning movement, Operation SHINGLE. Both Clausewitz and Jomini gave substantial treatment to enveloping operations in their writing. Jomini's fundamental principle also included acting "upon the communications of the enemy as much as possible without compromising one's own."⁵⁵ He asserted that "as a general principle...the decisive points of maneuver are on that flank of the enemy upon which, if his opponent operates, he can more easily cut him off from his base and supporting forces without being exposed to the same danger."⁵⁶ While holding the potential for great results, there is, as Jomini saw, significant danger in enveloping maneuvers. "Even when the extremity of the enemy's front of operations is gained, it is not always safe to act upon his rear, since by so doing the assailant in many cases will lose his own communications."⁵⁷ Addressing this topic further in his discussion of strategic lines, Jomini postulated that "strategic lines cannot be interior when our efforts are directed against one of the extremities of the enemy's front of operations."⁵⁸ Recognizing the advantage of interior lines, Jomini continued to warn that exterior lines may be taken when numerically superior "to attain a great success; but the operation must be of short duration, and care must have been taken to prepare a plan of safe retreat."⁵⁹ Lastly, "a maneuver to outflank and turn a wing should be connected with other attacks, and opportunely supported by an attempt of the remainder of the army on the enemy's front, either against the wing turned or against the center."⁶⁰

Clausewitz's thoughts on an envelopment were similar. "The enveloping

or turning movement may have two objectives. It may aim at disrupting, or cutting, communications, causing the army to wither and die, and thus be forced to retreat; or it may aim at cutting off the retreat itself."⁶¹ If the aim is the latter and the envelopment successful it has psychological as well as physical effects. It will "tend to paralyze movement and the ability to resist, and so affect the balance between victory and defeat."⁶² Clausewitz viewed the combination of physical and moral factors as "inseparable" in destroying the enemy's forces, the superior means of operational art. However, "the advantage that the destruction of the enemy possesses over all other means is balanced by its cost and danger; and it is only to avoid these risks that other policies are employed."⁶³ Because of these potential costs and danger, an operational envelopment "can only be justified if the attacker is strong enough not to have any doubts about the outcome."⁶⁴ As an additional caution Clausewitz wrote:

As for an army's retreat being cut off, the threat of narrowed or endangered lines of retreat should likewise not be overrated. Recent experience has made it plain that where the troops are good and their commanders bold they are more likely to break through than be trapped.⁶⁵

These two theorists, however, certainly did not corner the market with regard to truth and war. After all, they were both of the Napoleonic era and warfare had changed significantly by 1943. The British theorist, B.H. Liddell Hart, wrote extensively during the inter-war years and was in many respects antithetical to Clausewitz. Hart wrote that "dislocation" is the aim of strategy--"the true aim is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this."⁶⁶ Dislocation could be accomplished by methods which included compelling a sudden change in the enemy front or endangering his supplies.⁶⁷ In taking these actions the physical aspect must be combined with the psychological aspect and "only when both are combined is the strategy truly an indirect

approach, calculated to dislocate the opponent's balance."⁶⁸ Obviously, Liddell Hart and Clausewitz were not thinking on entirely different lines. Liddell Hart also adds caution and some qualifications to use of such an indirect approach:

The mere action of marching indirectly towards the enemy and on the rear of his dispositions does not constitute a strategic indirect approach. Strategic art is not so simple. Such an approach may start by being indirect in relation to the enemy's front, but by the very directness of its progress towards his rear may allow him to change his dispositions, so that it soon becomes a direct approach to his new front.⁶⁹

To prevent the enemy from successfully turning his front, Liddell Hart called for a "distraction" in conjunction with the indirect approach. The object of the distraction is to "deprive the enemy of his freedom of action."⁷⁰

A synthesis of all three views on this type of operation would include consensus on several points. Operational maneuver against the enemy's lines of communication holds the potential for decisive action and great success. An envelopment of this type also holds significant dangers and must be approached accordingly. Included in the considerations implicit in this danger are simultaneous attacks against the enemy's front, relative superiority at the decisive point, and aggressive execution.

Theory suggests then that SHINGLE did hold the potential for great success. The German center of gravity was vulnerable--very susceptible to a distraction in Liddell Hart's terms. The defensibility of the terrain would allow the Allies to turn the tables on the enemy with respect to this advantage and trap a substantial force south of Rome. While other secondary routes of withdrawal were available northeast out of the Liri Valley to Route 5, the Alban Hills provided choke points on the two major lines of communication to the XIV Panzer Corps as well as commanding observation to both the south and west. The nearby beaches and port at Anzio provided the Allies an excellent axis of advance for this deep maneuver. The Allies not

only had the amphibious capability to utilize the axis, but also the air superiority with which to cover the maneuver.

But what of the dangers of which the theorists warned? Liddell Hart wrote that "superior weight at the intended decisive point does not suffice unless that point cannot be reinforced in time by the opponent."⁷¹ The Germans had the capability to reinforce from both the Fourteenth Army in northern Italy and from outside Italy as well. The reinforcement had been planned and to some extent practiced. The issue of time would depend mostly on Allied air interdiction efforts, but weather was clearly a factor in considering the effectiveness of air power at that time of year. It would prove to be limited. As it was, movements of units such as the 65th Infantry Division from Genoa and the 715th Infantry Division from southern France proved the German capability for rapid reinforcement. Reinforcing elements began arriving as early as 26 January to contain and later counterattack the Anzio beachhead.⁷²

Besides the capabilities of reinforcement to the Tenth Army area, the Tenth Army itself would have the advantage, according to Jomini, of fighting on a central position. "For forces nearly equal, all central or interior positions would be preferable to exterior ones....Great mobility and activity on the part of the troops occupying these positions will be a strong element of security or superiority over the enemy, since it renders possible rapid concentration at different and successive points of the front."⁷³ Kesselring used this advantage to employ units of the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and the Herman Goerrino Division successively, first to the Tenth Army front and subsequently against the Anzio beachhead.

The Germans also had the advantages of defense. Clausewitz's "stronger form of war." At both levels Clausewitz asserts that the factors of terrain, surprise, and concentric attack can all be utilized by the defender to his

advantage. In an interesting juxtaposition, the advantageous central position described by Jomini becomes the basis for concentric attacks by the defender against the offender's separated thrusts. The strength of the defense was epitomized in Italy by the battles for Cassino.

Lastly, the fighting ability of the enemy must be considered in light of Clausewitz's warning with regard to good troops with bold commanders. The Germans had been defending and withdrawing in the face of heavy enemy pressure in Sicily and Italy for half a year. While they had yielded ground they had made the Allies pay dearly for all their advances. They continued to fight with tenacity and agility. The escape of the XIV Panzer Corps in May 1944 clearly demonstrated that the Germans still held these two qualities at this time.

Besides German advantages in defending, there were Allied disadvantages in an operational offense. Alexander faced significant limitations in terms of the number of divisions available, the number of landing craft available, and the duration of support by those craft. The second factor dictated the strength with which he could thrust to the decisive point. The first factor placed a constraint on operations against the front. However, it is seldom that a commander has all the resources he wants.

Other factors played to his disadvantage. The Allies fought rapid swollen rivers, mud, and steep mountainous slopes throughout the winter. This forced attacking units to pause often to regroup and to bring up supplies and support. Also, the friction inherent in coalition warfare must be cited as a disadvantage that challenged Alexander in trying to execute this type of operation. Commanders with diverse perspectives due to national background, doctrinal differences, and parochialism certainly contrasted to an enemy whose leaders shared a common cultural background. The histories of this campaign contain various allegations of pusillanimity on the part of

Alexander, egotism and self-interest on the part of Clark, fear of casualties on the part of the British, and an inclination on the part of American commanders to accept bloody battle lightly.

While it would be speculation to suggest on the basis of theory that the Allies could have won "The Battle for Rome," the theoretical concepts just reviewed do show why they did not, illuminating the causes of the effects. These may be summarized into three basic causes. First, Alexander and Clark failed to recognize and focus on a decisive battle--a battle of annihilation. Second, Clark's and Lucas's conservatism destined the effort to be less than successful. Third, supporting attacks along the front were inadequate and not well coordinated. Let's look at each of these areas in more detail.

It is impossible to know the exact thoughts of Alexander and Clark, but there is substantial evidence to suggest that neither fully appreciated this operation in the terms that the theories suggest. While both commanders' intentions included threatening the XIV Corps from the rear, neither expressed any specific intent to destroy those forces. On the contrary, both looked for the threat to cause withdrawal. In his order, "The Battle for Rome," Alexander's directives include that the "Commander Fifth Army will so conduct his operations as to force the enemy to withdraw North of Rome."⁷⁴ Clark's intent quoted earlier shows this same line of thought. As suggested by Alexander's title for the operation, the primary focus was on Rome. To get there they needed to force the defenders out of their solid positions to the south. As experience told them that a "push" would not work, perhaps a "pull" caused by a rear threat would. As they were not focused on a decisive battle in terms of annihilation, they only needed to threaten, not actually strike, the rear of the XIV Corps. They did not know or did not heed Clausewitz's assertion that "the decision in arms is for all major and minor

operations in war what cash payment is in commerce...regardless how rarely settlements actually occur, they can never be entirely absent."⁷⁵ Even if Alexander understood the precepts of theory with regard to the rear threat, he was not prepared to settle the account in cash. Not only did he fail to destroy the XIV Corps, he failed to disrupt Kesselring's capability to react.

The assessment that Alexander lacked a full appreciation of the operational context in December and January appears validated by later events. With the arrival of his new chief of staff, Alexander planned DIADEN with a specific aim of annihilation, and his intent for this operation was distinctly changed from "The Battle for Rome." The British soldier and historian of personal experience in Italy, W.G.F. Jackson, attributed Harding with being the first to actually envision a battle of annihilation in Italy, as shown by an appreciation which Harding prepared in February.⁷⁶

Alexander wrote in his Memoirs that "the whole undertaking, of course, was a risk; but it was a carefully calculated risk and had every opportunity of coming off if the operations had been handled with dash and vigour--which, as I have made clear, they were not."⁷⁷ The Germans certainly did not fail to notice the lack of aggressiveness on the part of the Allied amphibious force. Kesselring's chief of staff, General Siegfried Westphal, wrote that "the enemy remained astonishingly passive....It was therefore possible to build up a new front to oppose him."⁷⁸ By failing to strike with the "energy" advocated by Jomini in his fundamental principle, the maneuver resulted only in a direct approach to a new front, as Liddell Hart had warned. They did not dislocate the enemy. Clark's cautions to Lucas dissuaded the latter from striking out aggressively to the decisive point. VI Corps instead remained near Anzio, which, as events proved, was clearly not decisive of itself. They achieved operational surprise but squandered it by failing to draw any offensive advantage from it.

Clausewitz wrote that "prudence is the true spirit of defense, courage and confidence the true spirit of the attack."⁷⁹ Alexander, Clark, and Lucas all seem to be thinking to the contrary. While Lucas was clearly conservative (and paid for it by later being relieved), Clark obviously was too, even if he would not express his caution in his written orders. Both Alexander and Clark visited the beachhead on D-Day and every few days thereafter. Neither directed or encouraged Lucas to do anything more aggressive; instead both expressed initial satisfaction.⁸⁰ It was not until 27 January that Alexander expressed dissatisfaction to Clark, who felt that the criticism came then only because of Churchill's impatience for Rome, which had been communicated to Alexander.⁸¹ But 27 January was already much too late for achievement of psychological if not physical advantage from the envelopment. Kesselring concluded on D-Day "that morning I already had the feeling that the worst danger had been staved off.... As I traversed the front I had the confident feeling that the Allies had missed a uniquely favourable chance."⁸²

Though the two assault divisions of the VI Corps did not kick out of the beachhead immediately to exploit their surprise, what can be said concerning the employment of the other sixteen divisions of 15th Army Group? They did in fact achieve success in drawing Kesselring's mobile reserves from the vicinity of Rome to the aid of the XIV Panzer Corps. Westphal credits the Allies this much by writing that "the enemy's stratagem succeeded completely. There now occurred the very thing that should have been avoided at all costs."⁸³ However, X Corps success in crossing the Garigliano was the limit of the success of the entire Army Group's efforts on the Gustav Line.

Clark's attack was a sequential effort by three corps across a broad front that produced small independent efforts that were checked. His "main" attack on the Cassino front was made by a division minus a regiment held in

corps reserve. While some minor regrouping was accomplished prior to the operation, neither Clark or Alexander concentrated their force for a thrust on the Gustav Line. Eighth Army remained in the Adriatic sector with six divisions. For DIADEN, the same sector would be watched by a two division corps. Neither Clark or Alexander took action to reinforce the limited gains of the X Corps across the Garigliano, though both controlled forces which could have been committed to just such a purpose. That a drive up the Ausente Valley could have unlocked the German hold on the Liri Valley was shown by the French in May. No such actions were taken, nor any other that might have provided pressure on the front. On 6 February, Churchill wrote to Wilson, "Why has there been no heavily mounted aggressive offensive on the main front to coincide with the withdrawal of troops by the Germans to face the landing?"⁸⁴

In the common analogy of a hammer and anvil, this operation provided neither. VI Corps never drove out to the Alban Hills to provide an anvil. The remainder of 15th Army Group, though they created an opportunity for the anvil to be emplaced, never formed or swung the hammer. The opportunity to smash the German center of gravity between the two was lost. And the Germans realized it.

V. ANALYSIS--EVALUATING EMPLOYMENT OF MEANS

The challenge of operational art is to devise ways within available means and with acceptable risk to achieve strategic aims. This task usually devolves on the commander of the theater of operations. However, he frequently is helped or hindered by superiors and/or subordinates. In the case at hand, Alexander was the primary operational commander even though Wilson was the theater commander. While Wilson commanded at the operational level, it was Alexander who had primary direction of the major operation--who

held the paintbrush as an operational "artist." Alexander's artistry, of course, was very much affected by the actions of both his superiors and subordinates. Not only did Churchill define his immediate aim, he largely dictated the way and the means. The risks involved deserve further analysis at the level of the campaign. But before looking at the risks of the operation, let's look at all the potential gains--the potential aims that might have been fulfilled.

If SHINGLE and the associated operations had been successful they surely would have delivered Churchill's prize of Rome in the winter of '43-44. The Allies also might have destroyed the predominant portion of the German XIV Panzer Corps and Kesselring's mobile reserves. They most probably would have advanced by March to the Pisa-Rimini Line. The Germans would have been forced to send a substantial number of reinforcements, perhaps six to eight divisions, to restabilize the front in the Apennines. German morale would be seriously shaken. The morale and reinforcements would affect other fronts as well as Italy. The Allies would have captured additional forward airfields and continued the Combined Bomber Offensive from bases closer to the Reich.

What about the risks? The risks of executing a cautious operation unfocused on decisive battle are laid out clearly by the historical events that did in fact follow. The campaign in the Mediterranean continued up the boot until the end of the war, contributing little to the final outcome. The risks of executing an aggressive operation focused on annihilation also has risks, some of which we have already seen. These risks, however, had implications greater than the failure of a single major operation. They implied operational risks for the Mediterranean theater and in turn strategic risks for the war in the Europe.

The obvious risk, as the commanders involved noted, was that the Anzio force could itself be annihilated. Depending on the severity of this defeat

and the actions along the Gustav line. 15th Army Group conceivably could be left with only sufficient force to defend or conduct limited tactical attacks. If this were the case, Wilson would have "lost" by the criteria established in the preceding chapter. Without the threat of Allied operational maneuver the Germans would have been free to divert forces from Italy to other fronts, at least until the Allies reinforced the theater, if they indeed would do so.

It is also obvious that such a defeat would have precluded ANVIL in the spring as Wilson would have had insufficient troops to generate the invasion force while defending in Italy. OVERLORD would have had no supporting operation in Italy or southern France. Perhaps more importantly, the psychological effect on the Allies may have been devastating. The decisive failure of a major amphibious landing four or five months prior to OVERLORD would certainly have had damaging effects on the latter operation.

Churchill, Alexander, and Clark all saw risks in Operation SHINGLE. Churchill wrote of "potential mortal risks to the landed forces."⁸⁵ Alexander termed the operation a "carefully calculated risk."⁸⁶ Mark Clark used the same term to title his autobiographical account of the war. However, the writings of all three show a focus on tactical risks as opposed to operational risks. The risks accepted in late 1943 and early 1944 may have been "estimated" but "calculated" implies an exactness that was absent.

In his final chapter of On War Clausewitz addresses a strategy for the total defeat of an enemy, the aim of the Allies in Europe. He proposed two principles:

The first principle is that the ultimate substance of enemy strength must be traced back to the fewest possible sources, and ideally to one alone. The attack on these sources must be compressed into the fewest possible actions--again, ideally, into one. Finally, all minor actions must be subordinated as much as possible. In short the first principle is: act with the utmost concentration. The second principle is: act with the utmost speed. No halt or detour must be permitted without good cause.⁸⁷

The one source of strength that Clausewitz refers to is the center of gravity. The first task of strategy then, according to Clausewitz, is to identify that center of gravity; the second is "to ensure that the forces to be used against that point are concentrated for a main offensive."⁸⁸ If one accents this, it is clear that this main offensive would be made in one primary theater of operations with operations in other theaters being strictly secondary. In a sense, this is nothing more than the application of the principle of economy of force at the strategic level.

Some key British leaders, however, apparently did not accept the necessity of one main effort. In a September 1943 message to Field Marshall Smuts of South Africa, a staunch advocate of Mediterranean priority over a cross-channel effort, Churchill stated that "British loyalty to OVERLORD is keystone of (the) arch of Anglo-American co-operation. Personally I think , enough forces exist for both hands to be played, and I believe this to be the right strategy."⁸⁹ His Chiefs of Staff thought similarly. Although the agreement at TRIDENT and QUADRANT was for a 1 May 1944 OVERLORD, the British Chiefs were looking in November 1943 to delay it until July. Such delay would allow, in their opinion, sufficient resources for both OVERLORD and the Mediterranean to "be set on a proper footing."⁹⁰ If OVERLORD were delayed so both could go forward, which was the true main effort? In the following spring when the Anzio failure raised the ANVIL issue for reconsideration, Montgomery wrote to Eisenhower, "I recommend very strongly that we now throw the whole weight of our opinion onto the scales against ANVIL. Let us have two really good major campaigns--one in Italy and one in OVERLORD."⁹¹ It would seem that these British leaders were either unaware of the theoretical benefits for a focused effort or were aware of them but still favored a contrary course.

The answer seems to lie closer to the latter. In many respects

Churchill's thinking was contrary to Clausewitz's and his advocacy for opportunism in the Mediterranean can be viewed as advocacy for a strategy of exhaustion versus a strategy of annihilation as represented by America's desire for a decisive stroke across the channel, through northwest Europe, and to the heart of the Reich. One noted American historian, who has studied the impacts of Churchill's strategic thought at length, called the Prime Minister's rejection of Clausewitz deliberate, but also charged that "the military doctrines of Winston Churchill...made sense only in terms of a mediated peace."⁹² But it was not a mediated peace that the Allies sought. Their endeavor was total war, their goal was unconditional surrender. The decisive stroke to win the unconditional surrender of Germany would be made through northwest Europe, the first step to that end being a cross channel attack. Churchill and the British had agreed to this at TRIDENT and QUADRANT. Despite the limited successes in the Mediterranean in '43, all three Allies agreed again at Tehran that their strategy would be one main effort in the west, OVERLORD, supported to every extent possible by ANVIL. The intent of the agreement is clear: pursuit of other objectives under the guise of the agreements must be considered as duplicity. Such pursuit would amount to substitution of aims for ways already chosen and to which Allied means were already committed without full exposure of the risks entailed.

The challenge facing Allied leaders in the Mediterranean in late 1943 was to design their next campaign, not just their next major operation. The strategic aim and the general concept of the campaign had been agreed to in Tehran. OVERLORD was paramount; the Mediterranean theater would support OVERLORD with ANVIL and by transferring assault shipping as directed. The capture of Rome and advance to the Pisa-Rimini line were desirable but not essential to the achievement of this strategic aim. In fact, if certain risks were ignored, these operations could prove damaging to the agreed

strategic aim. In a yet different twist in utilizing the term "center of gravity." Clausewitz wrote that "the purpose of a great battle is to act...as the provisional center of gravity of the entire campaign."⁹³ An invasion of southern France should have been that "center of gravity" for the next campaign in the Mediterranean. Instead, while not at the time intended to be, the Allies' offensive in January became the central battle of a campaign whose last step had not been fully considered before taking the first.

There is some irony in the fact that had Churchill's intention clearly been to seek and exploit a decision in the secondary theater, even at the potential cost of the agreed main effort, Clausewitz offered an argument that the Prime Minister might have used to support his reasoning. In planning a war for total defeat of an enemy, Clausewitz wrote, "the principle of aiming everything at the enemy's center of gravity admits of only one exception-- that is, when secondary operations look exceptionally rewarding."⁹⁴ Clausewitz added a note of caution, however, by repeating that "only decisive superiority can justify diverting strength without risking too much in the principal theater."

VI. CONCLUSIONS.

It would be unfair to criticize what was done without offering a feasible alternative of what could have been done. In addressing operations in a secondary theater, Clausewitz suggested a limited objective offensive with battles undertaken "based on the following assumptions that: (a) there is a fair prospect of victory; and (b) if they end in defeat, not too much is lost."⁹⁵ Eisenhower's design for carefully planned minor offensives was clearly in consonance with this thinking and should have been the basis for continued operations in Italy through the winter of '43-44, even if it meant delaying the capture of Rome. Contrary to what the Allies actually did in

May of '44, they should have maintained the threat of invasion in the vicinity of Rome as a deception measure and executed the actual invasion of southern France immediately prior to or in conjunction with OVERLORD.

How would this course of action have benefitted the Allied strategy? First, it would have supported OVERLORD by diverting German attention and forces from the main landing at Normandy. By capturing the port complex in the vicinity of Marseilles, the Allies would have been able to feed forces and supplies into the Western European theater much faster. By the summer of 1944, General Marshall held some 40-50 divisions in the United States waiting for means by which to enter Europe for the decisive campaign.⁹⁶ The extent to which Marseilles actually contributed to the Allied logistical situation even with its late capture in 1944 speaks of the potential advantages of capturing these ports three months earlier. In December 1944 Marseilles still provided the greatest source of supply into the theater, exceeding Antwerp by almost ten percent and providing more than double of any other port in use at the time.⁹⁷ It is conceivable that the earlier invasion of southern France could have contributed substantially to an earlier victory over Germany, and perhaps to a different division of post-war Europe as well.

ANVIL could not have been executed as described here without problems. Landing craft were indeed short and OVERLORD rightfully should have had priority, but the Tehran strategy only called for executing ANVIL at the greatest scale possible. Additionally, the Germans may have withdrawn forces from Italy once the Allies had committed themselves to the invasion of southern France. Sufficient Allied forces would have remained in Italy, however, so that any such withdrawal would have been limited.

Regardless of where this alternative course might have led, this historical example does demonstrate the utility of military theory in explaining cause and effect. General Clark was wrong. Things did happen by

the book with regard to Fifth Army operations in January 1944. Clark's orders, actions, and writing show that he did not fully appreciate what the books had to say. If it seems unfair to expect our generals to memorize Clausewitz and Jomini or to carry their theoretical works to battle, it is certainly not unfair to expect them to know their own army's doctrine. Clark might have been guided in this particular instance by the discussion on envelopment operations in The Principles of Strategy for an Independent Corps or Army in a Theater of Operations, published by the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth in 1936. In its treatment of this subject, the manual included the following:

A wide envelopment....in conjunction with a strong frontal attack....is the best way not only to defeat but also to destroy the enemy.

The mission of these units must be to attack the flank and rear of the enemy and prevent hostile withdrawal.

In executing a wide envelopment the enveloping force normally gives up partially or altogether its line of communication in order to threaten those of the enemy. Therefore, the decisive battle can result only in the total defeat of one of the two sides.

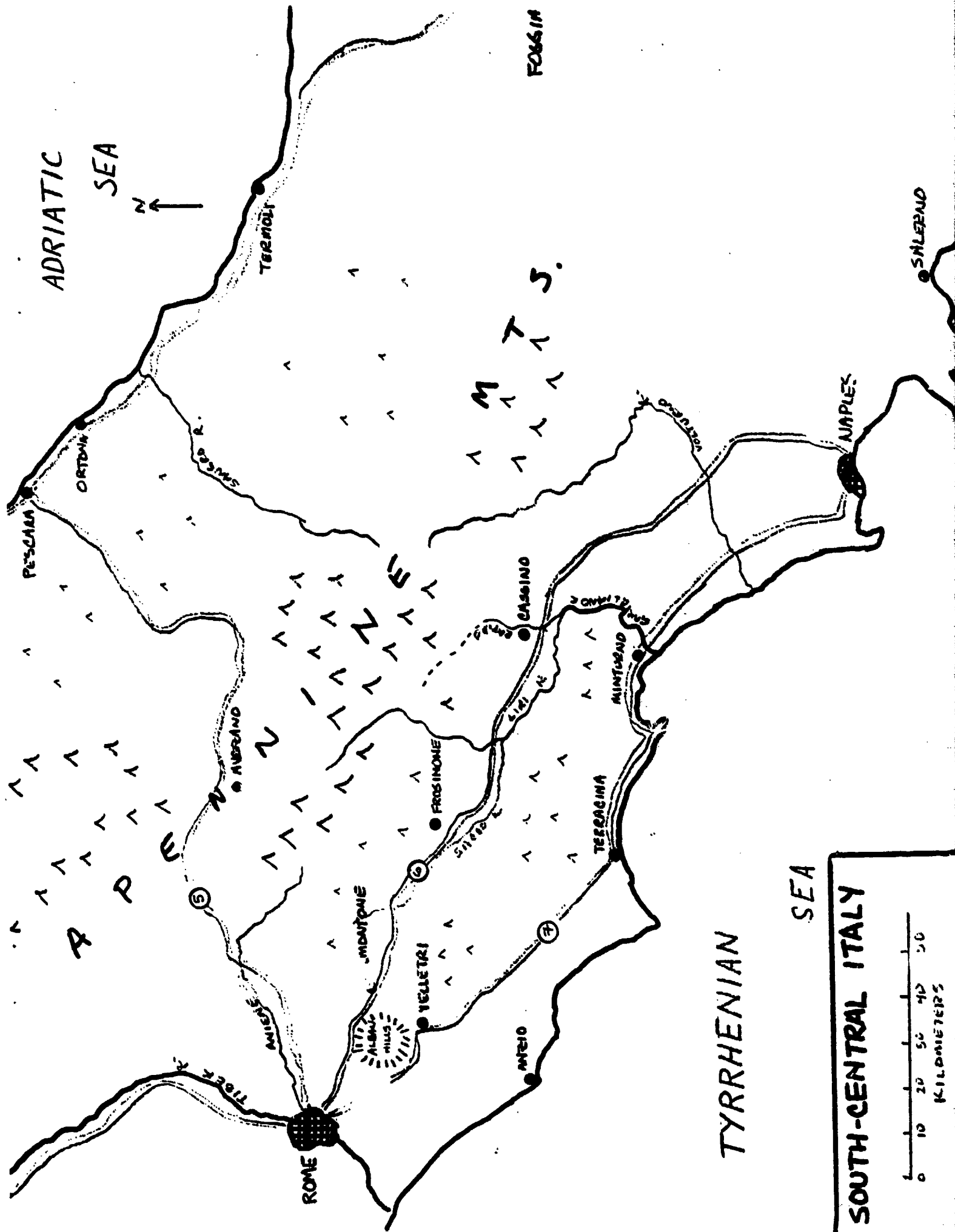
In this doctrine Clark should have been able to see the essentials for success as well as gain an appreciation for the risks. He also should have been wary of conservatism as the manual also states that commanders "must believe in the success of such an envelopment... If the envelopment is executed in a slow and dilatory manner it has little chance of success."⁹⁸

Even if Rome was accepted as an objective of the Allied efforts in the Mediterranean in early 1944, theory could have provided clearer operational insight that would have helped Clark and Alexander in designing and executing their operation, and also helped them more fully appreciate any risks they took by accepting political or resource constraints that delimited their operational scope. With a sound grasp of theory, Alexander and Wilson may have been able to see the potential impact of SHINGLE on ANVIL before the former was launched, and appraised Churchill accordingly. If the Prime

Minister insisted. They should have applied all efforts toward winning a decisive battle, in spite of the risks involved, which would then have been appreciated and accepted.

Churchill does not hold sole responsibility for assuming these risks. He initiated these operations in the Mediterranean with the concurrence of President Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Whether they fully appreciated the risks or could articulate a strong argument against taking them must be questioned. Eventually, in June 1944, the divergence of American and British strategic thinking for Europe came to a head after Rome had been captured and the 15th Army Group was still exploiting DIADEM. The United States sought to withdraw forces from Italy in order to launch ANVIL at last. The United Kingdom sought to continue exploiting the victory in Italy. The impasse was broken only by intervention of President Roosevelt, in the end citing American domestic politics--the potential backlash should OVERLORD fail while U.S. forces were diverted to the Balkans--as a primary factor for his decision.⁹⁹ The result of the 29 June decision was to leave the British with a sense of "anger and foreboding." Churchill reportedly told his chiefs that "an intense impression must be made upon the Americans that we have been ill-treated and are furious."¹⁰⁰

Perhaps Churchill was justified in his feelings. A number of authors have argued the mistaken insistence of the United States in pushing Allied strategy at this time to ANVIL and away from further exploitation in the Mediterranean. However, Churchill's despair may be justified less on these grounds than on grounds that politics, not coherent operational art or strategy, were used to refute his request to continue in Italy. Theory might have provided more of a basis for such argument than our joint staff utilized. Theory might have provided the insight and argument to say "no" in December 1943, not June 1944.



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